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Internally displaced persons

Note by the Secretary-General

The Secretary-General has the honour to transmit to the members of the General Assembly the report prepared by the representative of the Secretary-General on internally displaced persons, Mr. Francis Deng, in accordance with Commission on Human Rights resolution 1995/57 of 3 March 1995 and Economic and Social Council decision 1995/273 of 25 July 1995.

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Annex

Report on internally displaced persons, prepared by the representative of the Secretary-General, in accordance with Commission on Human Rights resolution 1995/57 and Economic and Social Council decision 1995/273

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I. Introduction

1. The phenomenon of internal displacement, affecting at least 25 million people, continues to pose one of the greatest and most pressing challenges to the international community. In response to that challenge, the Secretary-General, at the request of the Commission on Human Rights, appointed a representative on internally displaced persons in 1992. The Commission extended the representative's mandate for another two years in 1993 and for three additional years in 1995.

2. The representative's role may be described as one of a catalyst, serving both to raise awareness of the plight of the internally displaced and to stimulate effective action on their behalf. In performing that function, his mandate has crystallized into three main areas of work: (a) the development of an appropriate normative framework for meeting the protection and assistance needs of the internally displaced; (b) the promotion of effective institutional arrangements for meeting those needs; (c) focusing, through country visits, on specific situations of internal displacement that the representative, through dialogue with the Government and other actors concerned, aims to ensure are effectively addressed. Following from his report to the General Assembly at its fifty-first session (A/51/483 and Add.1 and 2), the present report provides an overview of the work accomplished in the three areas of the mandate and identifies the major challenges ahead.

II. The normative framework

3. The extent to which existing legal norms address the needs of internally displaced persons has been a subject of study by the representative since the inception of his mandate. After several years of intensive work in collaboration with a team of international legal experts, the representative submitted to the Commission at its fifty-first session a compilation and analysis of legal norms pertaining to internally displaced persons (E/CN.4/1996/52/Add.2). In the study he examined relevant provisions of human rights law, humanitarian law and, by analogy, refugee law to determine the extent to which they covered the protection and assistance needs of the internally displaced. He concluded that while existing law covered many aspects of particular relevance to internally displaced persons, there nonetheless were significant areas in which the law failed to provide adequate protection. Weaknesses related, for instance, to the need for an expressed right not to be unlawfully displaced, to have access to protection and assistance during displacement and to enjoy a secure return and reintegration.

4. The General Assembly, in its resolution 50/195 of 22 December 1995, called upon the Commission to consider the question of establishing, on the basis of the compilation, an appropriate normative framework for the protection of internally displaced persons, to which the Commission responded by assigning, in its resolution 1996/52 of 19 April 1996, that task to the representative. In the view of the representative, as pointed out in previous reports to the General Assembly and the Commission, there is a need for a restatement of relevant existing law and a clarification of its provisions in a single body of principles. Consolidating in one place the numerous relevant norms that are at present too dispersed and diffuse to be effective would serve several useful purposes. For example, it would call attention to the need for the better implementation of existing norms. In that way, the document would prove valuable to the work of Governments, international organizations and non-governmental organizations in promoting and protecting the rights of the internally displaced. Moreover, it would serve the educational purpose of increasing international awareness of the plight of internally displaced persons and of the need for further measures to address it effectively.

5. Accordingly, the representative, in collaboration with a team of experts in international law, is finalizing a draft body of guiding principles pertaining to situations of internal displacement. The principles mark the first attempt to articulate the meaning and nature of protection specifically for the internally displaced. A meeting of legal experts held at Geneva in June 1996 began drafting the guiding principles under the direction of the representative. The principles were further developed at a subsequent meeting, held in October 1996, at which representatives of United Nations agencies and non-governmental organizations also participated, and at a third legal round-table discussion in April 1997. A final meeting, to be hosted by the Government of Austria in January 1998, will bring together legal experts from the various geographic regions as well as representatives of United Nations agencies, regional organizations and non-governmental organizations to discuss the guiding principles and their applicability before being forwarded by the representative to the Commission at its fifty-fourth session.

6. At the same session, the representative will also transmit to the Commission a report reviewing the content and limitations of the law relating to the right not to be arbitrarily displaced. The need to address prevention prompted that inquiry into the extent to which existing law provided protection against arbitrary displacement. The

study found that there were few explicit international legal norms that protected people against individual or collective eviction and displacement or transfer from one region to another within their own country. Although an express prohibition of arbitrary displacement is contained in international humanitarian law (Geneva Conventions and Additional Protocols) and in the law relating to indigenous peoples, in human rights law, by contrast, the prohibition is only implicit in various provisions, particularly in the rights to freedom of movement, choice of residence and housing, and freedom from arbitrary interference with one's home. The various relevant legal norms, when considered together, can be said to point to a general rule according to which forced displacement may be undertaken only exceptionally, in the specific circumstances provided for in international law, and should last no longer than is absolutely required by the exigencies of the situation. Even then, it may not be effected on a discriminatory basis nor imposed arbitrarily.

7. The findings of the study, together with the compilation, provide the basis for a body of guiding principles that will be comprehensive in scope, providing protection in all three phases of internal displacement: prior to displacement, during displacement and during the process of return and reintegration.

8. The principles should apply to Governments and to non-State actors although promoting adherence to the principles by non-State actors will present particular challenges. The principles should contribute over time to the creation of the moral and political climate necessary for improved protection of the internally displaced.

9. The guiding principles should also be useful as a basis for monitoring the conditions of the internally displaced and as a yardstick against which to measure their treatment. For the representative, the compilation already serves as a useful reference point for monitoring situations of displacement, assessing the needs of the displaced and the degree to which they are being met, communicating with Governments and other actors in the countries concerned and mobilizing responses among international agencies, regional organizations and non-governmental organizations.

10. For international agencies and non-governmental organizations, the guiding principles will serve as a practical guide for their involvement with displaced populations. It is noteworthy that the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) has used the legal analysis undertaken by the representative to develop a reference manual for the use of its staff, as a means of providing them with guidance on the human rights and humanitarian standards applicable to internally displaced persons. It is to be hoped that other international agencies and non-governmental organizations will follow its example. Advocacy efforts of internally displaced persons themselves also stand to benefit from a clear and comprehensive statement of their rights. For Governments, meanwhile, the principles as well as the compilation that preceded them will serve as reminders of their obligations under existing international law as well as useful points of reference when drafting legislation pertinent to the internally displaced.

11. Wide acceptance and dissemination of the guiding principles is critical to encouraging their use by relevant actors at all levels. The Commission, in its resolution 1996/52, called for the wide dissemination of the compilation. It is the hope of the representative that the guiding principles will be made widely available as well.

III. The institutional framework

12. As was the case with the study of the normative framework, the representative's analysis and evaluation of existing institutional arrangements relevant to the internally displaced has revealed serious gaps. Previous reports of the representative have underlined the fact that there is a lack of institutional responsibility for the internally displaced, leading to the ad hoc provision of protection, assistance and reintegration and development support. The Secretary-General highlighted this institutional lacuna in his programme for reform of July 1997 (A/51/950, para. 186) by citing the challenge of providing protection and assistance to internally displaced persons as an example of a humanitarian issue that falls between the gaps in the existing mandates of the different agencies. As a result of that gap in the United Nations system, insufficient and inconsistent attention has been paid by the international community to the problem of internal displacement.

13. As regards coordination arrangements at the field level, it is the prerogative of the Inter-Agency Standing Committee, under the leadership of the Emergency Relief Coordinator, to decide on humanitarian coordination arrangements in a country or region. Under the programme for reform, one of the core functions of the Emergency Relief Coordinator is to ensure that humanitarian issues, including those which fall between the gaps of existing mandates of agencies, such as protection and assistance of internally displaced persons are addressed. That arrangement suggests a continuation of the collaborative approach that has guided the international response to the problem of internal displacement to date. Rather than creating a new institution or conferring upon an existing one full

responsibility for the internally displaced, inter-agency coordination remains the preferred option. It is perhaps the most realistic framework through which to proceed, given that the varied and extensive needs of the internally displaced for emergency assistance, protection and reintegration support exceed the capacity, mandate and expertise of any one organization.

14. At the same time, the Secretary-General, in his programme for reform, recognized the possibility of designating a lead agency in the field (para. 192). When a lead agency is selected, it is important that consideration be paid to the specific needs of the internally displaced and other affected populations as determining factors in allocating responsibility. If, for example, protection needs are paramount, bodies such as UNHCR, together with the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights and the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC), could play a principal role when it falls within their mandate.[a] When material or development needs are the central concern, responsibility for coordination could be conferred upon the World Food Programme, the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) or the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP). Regardless of the organization selected, such designation would confer on it overall, though not exclusive, responsibility for the humanitarian response. The lead agency therefore would still rely on collaborative efforts among all of the relevant agencies and seek to integrate into a comprehensive approach the work of the humanitarian, human rights and development regimes.

15. Although in the past few years progress has been made in developing collaborative relationships among the wide variety of institutional actors relevant to the internally displaced, they do not yet constitute the comprehensive response that is required. One promising step, previously highlighted by the representative, is the increasing exchange among agencies of memoranda of understanding that have the effect of dividing responsibility according to institutional expertise for specific tasks with respect to the internally displaced (E/CN.4/1997/43, para. 11). Nevertheless, in many humanitarian emergencies, the needs of the internally displaced are neglected because no locus of responsibility for them is identified.

16. The representative has found, in the course of studying the international response to several country situations, that conferring upon a particular agency primary responsibility for internally displaced persons, as occurred in Tajikistan and the former Yugoslavia, can result in greater attention being paid to their needs.[a] [b] In cases such as Burundi, Liberia and Rwanda, where no locus of responsibility was established for the internally displaced, their protection and assistance needs were less adequately addressed. Accordingly, it would seem appropriate that in each complex emergency, one operational entity should be charged with assessing and monitoring the protection and assistance needs of the internally displaced, raising awareness of their plight, mobilizing support from other agencies for addressing their needs and developing strategies towards that end. That role could be played by a lead agency or, in situations where no lead has been designated, by an appropriate operational agency on the ground. Ensuring that the agency receives the support of other agencies should be the responsibility of the resident coordinator, in the absence of which the principal agency for internally displaced persons itself could assume the coordinating function.

17. Ongoing human rights monitoring is critical to addressing the protection problems of the internally displaced, as well as to creating conditions that encourage their return and reintegration. To ensure that the coordinated response covers protection as well as assistance concerns, the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights should be requested to establish a human rights field presence where such presence does not already exist.

18. The United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights has declared a readiness to contribute to efforts aimed at providing internally displaced persons with protection on the ground and has outlined a programme of action emphasizing the importance of ensuring a human rights field presence in displacement crises.[c] Such human rights presence can be introduced either as a field monitoring mission or through the High Commissioner's advisory services and technical assistance programme for promoting human rights protection. Both forms of human rights field presence can make important contributions towards addressing the protection needs of the internally displaced. Based on recent experience, it is apparent that the capacity of human rights field monitoring missions needs to be strengthened and their protection role in relation to internally displaced persons made more comprehensive, to cover not only return and reintegration but also protection during displacement, particularly in camp situations. Furthermore, the Commission, at its fifty-second session (resolution 1996/52), called upon the High Commissioner to develop projects, in cooperation with Governments, international organizations and the representative, specifically aimed at promoting the rights of internally displaced persons as part of the programme of advisory services and technical cooperation. The Office of the High Commissioner needs to extend the activities of both mechanisms in order to cover

a larger number of situations of internal displacement. As that will require additional resources, the capacity of the United Nations human rights mechanisms will need to be strengthened so that they can play a more active role in ensuring that the protection concerns of internally displaced persons are addressed at the field level.

19. When human rights mechanisms are absent from the field, the task of ensuring that protection concerns are known and addressed falls on other actors. ICRC and UNHCR routinely undertake protection functions in accordance with their mandates, but they are not present in all situations. Even when they are present, protection needs often are of a magnitude too great to be met by those agencies alone. Relief and development agencies also need to address the protection needs of the internally displaced. Although they may lack the mandate and expertise to engage directly in protecting physical safety and human rights, they nonetheless can make important contributions in the area of protection, particularly by integrating protection concerns into the design of their programmes and by acting as advocates, calling the attention of both the authorities and the international community to the needs of the internally displaced.

20. Effective international response to situations of internal displacement in a collaborative, comprehensive and coherent manner requires a stronger locus of responsibility for internally displaced persons at the headquarters level. In May 1997, as part of the review of the capacity of the United Nations system for humanitarian assistance, undertaken in accordance with Economic and Social Council resolution 1995/56 of 28 July 1995, the Inter-Agency Standing Committee recommended that the role of the Emergency Relief Coordinator with regard to the internally displaced entail a number of responsibilities: advocacy on assistance and protection, resource mobilization and identification of gaps in the international response, assignment of responsibilities among agencies, including camp management, information management and support to field operations, including the negotiation of humanitarian access. At an inter-agency meeting in September 1997 the information management component was specified as involving the establishment, in consultation with external institutions, of a database of global information on internally displaced persons. This information initiative is particularly welcome since at present there exists no office within the United Nations for systematically collecting and receiving information on internal displacement. The pool of information on the various dimensions of internal displacement that is required should include, as the representative advocated previously, pending situations and efforts at prevention, causes and manifestations of existing situations, the degree of access of displaced persons to basic services, their protection concerns, the capacity and willingness of Governments to address their needs and the response of the international community (E/CN.4/1995/50, paras. 98-99). In addition, particular attention should be paid to gender-specific concerns, including the number of female-headed households, single unaccompanied women and school-aged girls and their particular needs. The issuance of periodic situation reports based on such information would be valuable in ensuring that situations of internal displacement are not overlooked or forgotten by the international community.

21. The representative plans to work with the Emergency Relief Coordinator in promoting greater integration of international response to situations of internal displacement. In a 1996 letter of understanding, the representative and the Emergency Relief Coordinator, in addition to making a shared commitment to the development of an information-sharing system on internally displaced persons, provided for the formulation of joint strategies to ensure that the protection as well as assistance needs of internally displaced persons would be addressed. In particular, they envisioned the possibility that the Emergency Relief Coordinator might request the representative to visit particular countries in which the situation warranted such attention. The representative and Emergency Relief Coordinator also agreed to sponsor joint briefings to apprise delegates to the United Nations of important issues relating to internal displacement.

22. The representative will also cooperate with the Emergency Relief Coordinator to ensure that the Complex Emergency Training Initiative includes, either as part of its general programme or as a specific module, training on internally displaced persons covering the legal norms pertaining to the provision of protection and assistance to them and strategies for monitoring and reporting on their needs.

23. At its September 1997 meeting, the Inter-Agency Standing Committee Working Group recognized the need for greater attention to be given to internally displaced persons in the inter-agency process as a whole. Towards that end, an inter-agency forum on internally displaced persons was revived in a different form, with the Inter-Agency Standing Committee Working Group replacing the Inter-Agency Task Force on Internally Displaced Persons.

24. The inclusion of the representative as a standing member of the Inter-Agency Standing Committee and its Working Group should help to ensure that issues of internal

displacement are addressed in those forums. At its September 1997 meeting the Standing Committee decided to extend an invitation to the representative to participate in its meetings and those of its subsidiary bodies. Under the previous arrangement, the representative could be invited to meetings of the Standing Committee on an ad hoc basis, whenever issues relating to his mandate were on the agenda. Yet, the fact that internal displacement would almost inevitably be an element of any complex humanitarian emergency in which the Standing Committee would be involved warranted the representative's more consistent participation in that forum.

25. The participation of the representative in the meetings of the Inter-Agency Standing Committee and its subsidiary bodies should also help to draw attention to protection as well as assistance concerns and to promote a more comprehensive approach to those problems. To date, the meetings have focused primarily on assistance. Providing internally displaced persons with protection as well as assistance should be of equal concern, as the Secretary-General's programme for reform confirms. An encouraging move towards that end was the decision of the Standing Committee in 1997 to make the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights a regular participant in its meetings. At the same time, all of the members of the Standing Committee should have a role to play in enhancing protection.

26. A more effective integration of the concerns of the internally displaced in the inter-agency framework would be enhanced by strong leadership from the Emergency Relief Coordinator. The Inter-Agency Standing Committee equally will need to play a more active role in several respects: assessing the degree to which the needs of the internally displaced are being met by the United Nations system generally as well as in specific situations, calling upon other United Nations agencies to play strong supporting roles in the humanitarian effort, pressing for political action to resolve the crises that create humanitarian emergencies and drawing attention to situations that receive insufficient attention. The representative, for his part, is committed to working closely with the Emergency Relief Coordinator and the Standing Committee as they assume the leadership roles required for ensuring that a reformed United Nations system results in an improved international response to the problem of internal displacement. Towards that aim, he also remains eager to cooperate and to ensure complementarity of action with other United Nations and thematic representatives and special rapporteurs, in particular the Secretary-General's recently appointed representative on the impact of conflict on children.

27. The collaborative framework, however, must extend beyond the United Nations system and its international humanitarian partners to encompass regional organizations and non-governmental organizations as well. All of those sets of actors have expanded their roles with internally displaced persons over the past few years. Regional initiatives relevant to internally displaced persons in the Americas, Africa and Europe have been detailed in earlier reports of the representative. In his report to the General Assembly at its fifty-first session (A/51/483, paras. 7-8), he gave particular attention to the Regional Conference to Address the Problems of Refugees, Displaced Persons, Other Forms of Involuntary Displacement and Returnees in the Countries of the Commonwealth of Independent States and Relevant Neighbouring States, held in Geneva on 30 and 31 May 1996. However, over a year after the Conference, it is clear that greater funding is needed in the follow-up phase to accelerate the implementation of its Programme of Action (A/51/341 and Corr.1, annex, appendix).

28. The important role played by local and international non-governmental organizations has also been detailed previously by the representative. (See, in particular, document E/CN.4/1995/50, paras. 228-242.) Attention needs to be drawn particularly to efforts by non-governmental organizations to develop worldwide statistics on internally displaced persons. The U.S. Committee for Refugees, for example, has expanded its *World Refugee Survey* to assess conditions affecting internally displaced persons. Another noteworthy initiative is the undertaking by the Norwegian Refugee Council of a global survey on internally displaced persons. The *Survey*, to be published annually beginning in the spring of 1998, will contain analyses of all country situations in which internally displaced persons are receiving or are in need of international protection or assistance, as well as of more wide-ranging regional and global trends. In addition, the project will produce a twice-yearly newsletter. As an important supplement to the survey, the project will maintain a Web site providing an on-line repository for information and documentation on internal displacement. In these ways, the survey project should make a valuable contribution by compiling and managing information on internally displaced persons as well as monitoring and reporting on the extent to which their needs are being met.

IV. Country visits

29. With the aim of ensuring that improvements in the normative and institutional frameworks are translated into practice, the country visits conducted by the representative

are among the most important features of his mandate. They enable the representative to focus attention on specific crises of internal displacement and, through solution-oriented dialogue with the Government concerned and in cooperation with the international agencies and non-governmental organizations present, to recommend corrective measures to be undertaken by the national authorities in cooperation with the international community. Country visits also advance the more universal purposes of furthering understanding of the problem of internal displacement in its various dimensions, such as its particular impact on women and children, as well as developing global and region-specific strategies towards its resolution.

30. Since his appointment, the representative has visited Burundi, Colombia, El Salvador, the former Yugoslavia, Mozambique, Peru, the Russian Federation, Rwanda, Somalia, Sri Lanka, the Sudan and Tajikistan, and presented his findings and recommendations in reports to the Commission on Human Rights and the General Assembly. Given that serious problems of internal displacement exist in more than 30 countries worldwide, there is considerable need to extend country visits as well as to pay follow-up visits.

31. In undertaking a mission, the representative, like other representatives and rapporteurs of the United Nations human rights mechanisms, acts upon an invitation from the national authorities in the country concerned. As a result, he has been unable to visit countries in which the Government refrains from accepting international cooperation in addressing the problem of internal displacement, even though it is often in those countries that the problem is particularly severe. Paradoxically, then, the countries upon which he has been able, through his visits, to focus attention are those with Governments that are more cooperative in acknowledging the situation of internal displacement in their country and the corresponding need to address it. Such is the case in the present report, in which the mention of specific countries stems from the fact that the representative has visited them, rather than from any suggestion that the situations in those countries warrant greater international scrutiny than those that the representative has not yet had the occasion to study first-hand. Even in countries where the representative has been able to conduct a mission, continued monitoring is essential to ensure that the cooperation demonstrated by the Government in inviting him to visit results in the undertaking of corrective measures. The need for follow-up is all the more critical since the situations of internal displacement in several of the States that the representative has visited require continued attention.

32. One important means of monitoring conditions is through an international human rights presence in the country. The United Nations human rights field mission in Burundi, for example, has drawn attention to internal displacement and has served to raise international concern about the forcible "regroupment" of Hutus. It could play an equally important role in ensuring that the return of those affected occurs under conditions of safety and dignity. Doing so, however, will require an augmented international presence. A similar need arises in Colombia, where internal displacement now reportedly affects some 1 million persons. The need for greater involvement on the part of the international community, underlined by the representative after his visit in June 1994, is even more pressing today, for both preventive and curative reasons (E/CN.4/1995/50/Add.1 and Add.1/Corr.1). The United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights recently established a field office that to date has directed its efforts towards strengthening the framework for human rights protection at both the national and local levels, but that could also play a useful role in monitoring the situation of internally displaced persons and promoting conditions for their voluntary return. Meanwhile, more involvement by humanitarian and development organizations with the internally displaced, in particular by UNHCR, UNDP and UNICEF, would contribute significantly to addressing their multiple needs effectively.

33. The establishment of a greater international presence, especially in the form of a human rights field mission, was also a recommendation of the representative with respect to Tajikistan, pursuant to his mission in 1996 (A/51/483/Add.1, annex). The High Commissioner subsequently dispatched a human rights needs-assessment mission and is currently developing plans for addressing, in cooperation with the Government, human rights problems, including those specifically pertinent to displacement.

34. It is the hope of the representative not only that the international human rights presence will be enhanced in Burundi, Colombia and Tajikistan as well as in other countries with problems of internal displacement, but also that specific attention will be devoted to the particular plight of the internally displaced. A welcome development is the human rights monitoring mission established by the High Commissioner in Abkhazia, Georgia, with a mandate that explicitly includes facilitating the creation of conditions for the return of the estimated 275,000 persons internally displaced from the region. Although hopes continue to be frustrated that the recently resumed peace talks between the two warring parties will result in agreement on the return of the displaced, the attention given by the High Commissioner

to the specific needs of the internally displaced is encouraging.

35. Since it is Governments that bear primary responsibility for addressing the plight of the internally displaced, the strengthening of national institutions is also an essential element of efforts to address existing situations as well as to prevent future problems of internal displacement. In Peru, for instance, the Government reportedly has taken several concrete steps to ameliorate the situation of the internally displaced since the representative's visit in 1995. Those efforts have included the appointment of an ombudsman to investigate individual allegations of human rights abuse. In a meeting with the representative in Washington, D.C., earlier in 1997, the ombudsman reported that legislation had been adopted and a national campaign initiated to provide documentation to the internally displaced. With respect to the process of return, the repopulation support programme reportedly has received additional funding that has enabled it to undertake activities in more parts of the country, as the representative had urged after his visit (E/CN.4/1996/52/Add.1, paras. 104-106). At the same time, there remains a need for the programme to extend its activities beyond supporting strictly return to also aid reintegration efforts. Thus, while the Government has undertaken some important efforts to address the needs of the internally displaced, expansion of those efforts is needed, as is the effective and speedy implementation of the measures agreed upon during the representative's visit.

36. National institutions, however well-developed, will be constrained in their effectiveness by extensive and ongoing armed conflict. In Sri Lanka, notwithstanding the Government's willingness to provide the internally displaced with assistance, the resumption of large-scale hostilities in the north of the country since the representative's visit in 1993 has often frustrated those efforts. It has been reported by the U. S. Committee for Refugees that up to half of the displaced do not receive government assistance and that even for those who do, medical supplies often do not arrive in time or in sufficient quantities. Greater involvement on the part of international humanitarian organizations could be helpful in filling those gaps and strengthening national efforts to address the plight of the displaced.

37. In countries for which there is a lack of information on the extent to which the representative's recommendations are being carried out, a return visit could be particularly valuable. For instance, the world's largest internally displaced populations can be found in the Sudan, which the representative visited in 1992. The considerable protection and assistance needs of the internally displaced as well as the challenges of addressing them warrant continued attention.

38. In countries that the representative visits, it would be helpful if United Nations humanitarian and human rights agencies present on the ground would assist in monitoring the extent to which the recommendations are being implemented. In May 1997 the Inter-Agency Standing Committee recommended that resident coordinators report regularly to both the Emergency Relief Coordinator and the representative on the situation of the internally displaced. That reporting requirement could serve a useful follow-up function in the countries that the representative has already visited as well as a means of drawing attention to problems that United Nations agencies and the representative should address. It should be recalled that the 1996 letter of understanding between the representative and the Emergency Relief Coordinator provided for cooperation in monitoring situations of internal displacement and in providing follow-up to the representative's visits.

39. There also exist possibilities at the regional level to monitor situations of internal displacement. The Organization of African States, for instance, has appointed a rapporteur on internally displaced persons who could make a valuable contribution in assessing the extent to which countries in the region are carrying out protection and assistance measures for the internally displaced. The Permanent Consultation on Internal Displacement in the Americas has undertaken its own missions to Colombia and Guatemala, with the former visit occurring after that of the representative. Elsewhere, other regional bodies, for example the Organization of African Unity Commission of Twenty on Refugees, could similarly engage in activities that may further the process of follow-up.

40. Non-governmental organizations also can make a significant contribution to the follow-up process by assessing, on a regular basis, the needs of the internally displaced. As noted above, the planned annual global survey on internally displaced persons promises to be a particularly useful tool for monitoring, together with local non-governmental organizations, problems of internal displacement worldwide. Country missions undertaken by other non-governmental organizations, such as the U. S. Committee for Refugees or Human Rights Watch, increasingly have paid specific attention to the plight of the displaced and thus constitute another valuable source of follow-up information.

41. With respect to countries that the representative has not yet had the opportunity to study first-hand, it should be recalled that the General Assembly, in its resolution 50/195

of 22 December 1995, called upon all Governments to continue to facilitate the activities of the representative and encouraged them to give serious consideration to inviting him to visit their countries so as to enable him to study and analyse more fully the issues involved.

V. The challenges ahead

42. International awareness of the global crisis of internal displacement has increased significantly since the appointment of the representative in 1992. In his reports to the Commission and the General Assembly, the representative has provided information on the magnitude of internal displacement worldwide, has identified specific needs of the internally displaced for protection and assistance, including highlighting the particular problems faced by women and children, has assessed the extent to which those needs are being met under existing normative and institutional frameworks and has reported in detail on specific country situations that he, through his country visits, has studied first-hand. This deepened understanding of the problem of internal displacement and of the existing international normative and institutional frameworks through which it is addressed has significantly enhanced the prospects of effective response to the needs of the internally displaced.

43. An appropriate normative framework for providing protection and assistance to the internally displaced is being developed through the formulation of a body of guiding principles. The challenge will then become one of ensuring that those principles are promoted and translated into action through the efforts of Governments, international organizations, non-governmental organizations and internally displaced persons alike. This will require the wide dissemination of the principles among all actors with a role to play in their implementation and the training of international and national staff in the norms pertaining to internally displaced persons.

44. With respect to the institutional framework, the reform programme of the Secretary-General, which specifically stipulates that the protection and assistance needs of internally displaced persons must be addressed, should serve to focus greater attention on situations of internal displacement. In many instances, it may require that principal responsibility for the internally displaced be assigned to a specific operational agency in each complex emergency. Integrating international efforts on behalf of the internally displaced in the work of the Inter-Agency Standing Committee should considerably improve the effectiveness of the collaborative approach to the challenges of internal displacement in each crisis situation.

45. Since it is in the field that the reform programme will have to make a difference, operational agencies should be encouraged to forge collaborative relationships with respect to the displaced and lend support to agencies that assume principal responsibility. Evaluating the extent to which international, regional and national responses address specific crises of internal displacement will be essential both for ensuring that specific situations are effectively addressed and for furthering the development of strategies at the regional and global levels. This will require that in addition to general advocacy for improved response to the global crisis of internal displacement, the country-specific approach should now assume greater prominence than it did during the initial phase, which was largely oriented towards a generic study of the problem.

46. The representative, with support from the United Nations, Governments and foundations, undertook, at the request of the Secretary-General, a major research project on the various dimensions of both the problem of internal displacement and the responses to it in order to improve the international response. The study, with a foreword by the Secretary-General, will be published in the coming months in two volumes. The first, entitled *Masses in Flight: The Global Crisis of Internal Displacement*,[a] provides a global and regional overview of the problem of internal displacement, examines the legal framework for addressing it, details intergovernmental efforts at both the international and regional levels, and non-governmental efforts and offers strategies for improving the response at the global, regional, subregional, national and local levels during the various stages of displacement, covering prevention, protection and assistance in actual situations and the promotion of durable solutions. A companion volume of 10 case studies, covering Burundi, Rwanda, Liberia, the Sudan, the Caucasus, the former Yugoslavia, Sri Lanka, Tajikistan, Colombia and Peru, examines in detail the causes and characteristics of internal displacement in some of the countries where the problem is most acute, assesses the extent to which the needs of the affected populations are met in those situations and recommends measures to be taken towards that objective. The study aimed not only at furthering understanding of the problem of internal displacement, but also at fostering, through the implementation of specific strategies, a more comprehensive and effective response to the needs of the displaced. Towards that end, and particularly in the light of the present process of United Nations reform, the representative has already shared many of the study's

findings and recommendations with actors both within and outside the United Nations system.

47. The findings of the study will be summarized in the report of the representative to the Commission on Human Rights at its fifty-fourth session. In keeping with the main objective of both the study and the mandate to raise greater awareness of and generate improved responses to the problem of internal displacement, the study's findings will also need to be made more widely available. The representative, at the request of the Secretary-General, has commissioned a shorter, more popularized version of the study, to be illustrated with photographs of internally displaced persons from different parts of the world. This should serve not only to promote understanding of the plight of the internally displaced in general, but also to personalize the problem as one that tragically affects the lives of millions of individuals worldwide.

48. The major challenge ahead consists of ensuring that the enhanced normative and institutional frameworks for providing protection and assistance to internally displaced persons result in an improved response to the plight of the individuals who have been uprooted. A greater focus on specific situations of internal displacement is required to ensure that the improvements made in the international response to displacement at the legal and policy levels translate into more effective action on the ground. To be sure, there will remain a need for promoting the guiding principles that currently are being finalized and for fostering more collaborative institutional arrangements, at both the policy and field levels, to further their implementation. Indeed, monitoring situations of internal displacement and engaging in advocacy on behalf of the displaced will continue to require greater attention, expertise and involvement on the part of all the relevant agencies.

Notes

[a] The criteria for involvement of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) with internally displaced persons are delineated in inter-office memorandum No. 33/93 and field office memorandum No. 33/93, issued by UNHCR on 28 April 1993. See *UNHCR's Operational Experience with Internally Displaced Persons* (Geneva: UNHCR, September 1994), annex I. The International Committee of the Red Cross, meanwhile, limits its involvement to situations of armed conflict.

[b] Deng, Francis M. and Roberta Cohen, *Masses in Flight: The Global Crisis of Internal Displacement*. Washington, D.C.: Brookings Institution (forthcoming).

[c] Specific suggestions for creating a framework for the continued on-site protection of the human rights of displaced persons and refugees are elaborated in the report of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights to the General Assembly *(Official Records of the General Assembly: Fiftieth Session, Supplement No. 36 (A/50/36), paras. 86-87)*.